

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

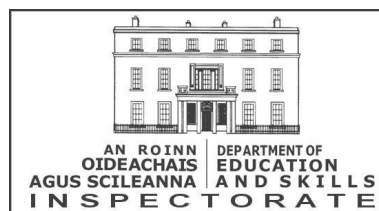
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Whole School Evaluation  
Management, Leadership and Learning**

**REPORT**

**Coomhola National School  
Coomhola, Bantry, Co. Cork  
Uimhir rolla: 15646J**

**Date of inspection: 2 December 2013**



## Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning Report

### Introduction

A Whole-School Evaluation – Management, Leadership and Learning (WSE - MLL) was undertaken in Coomhola National School in December 2013. This report is based on a selection of lessons observed in a range of learning settings in the school, interaction with pupils and review of their work, meetings with the principal and with board and parent representatives, completed parent and pupil questionnaires and a review of a representative sample of school documents. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

Coomhola National School is a rural mixed school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Cork and Ross. Ninety-three pupils attend the school and enrolment trends are steady.

The school has **strengths** in the following areas:

- The school is well managed and effectively led.
- Standards of teaching are very good in the school.
- The learning environment of the school is well managed and pupils are positively disposed to education.
- The learning achievements of pupils are satisfactory.
- Parents, staff and pupils have a strong sense of local identity and pride in their school.

The following areas **require improvement**:

- With respect to the writing strand in language learning it is recommended that more balance is attained between the writing process and the end product.
- More in-depth analysis of statistical and other data and a more robust tracking system for recording individual pupil progress would benefit the assessment practices of the school.
- Current school practices with respect to the certification of school accounts should be reviewed in line with Diocesan and Departmental guidelines.

### Findings

#### 1. The learning achievements of pupils

- The overall learning attainment of pupils is satisfactory. The learning environment is well developed and curriculum provision has sufficient breadth and balance. Pupils' questionnaire responses indicate that they have positive dispositions to learning, high levels of self-esteem and enjoy school. Standardised test scores indicate that, on a whole-school basis, the learning achievements of pupils in literacy and numeracy are very satisfactory. There is, however, some scope for development with respect to the more efficient tracking of individual pupil attainment levels. Pupils with special needs are well catered for and the support team effectively assist those at risk of underachieving using a well chosen range of strategies. Almost all pupils with special needs or disabilities are making very good progress towards the outcomes and learning targets identified in their individual programmes of work.

#### 2. The quality of teaching

- The overall quality of teaching in the school is very good. Teaching approaches were well matched to pupils' learning needs and lesson purposes were clear in all observed instances. Teacher preparedness for lessons was of a high quality though a variety of practices are favoured. More teacher independent and transferrable classroom planning would be worth promoting on a whole-school basis as means to further develop continuity and development across the curriculum.

With respect to the teaching processes and practices of the school the following pertained:

- Technology was used to promote learning in almost all classrooms and the technological infrastructure was well developed.
- Reading was promoted consistently as a key skill and as a leisure activity. Interventions such as 'Reading Buddies', 'Shared Reading' and 'Story Time' for infants are successfully implemented on a regular basis. However, in the general context of language teaching, and, with respect to the writing strand in particular, a better balance could be struck between the writing process and the end product as evidenced in copybooks, pupil displays and project work.
- Mathematics was taught effectively and related to real life situations in some instances. Mathematical literacy was promoted in all classes. On a whole-school basis some scope for development still exists with respect to the development of mathematics trails in the immediate school environment.
- Moltar ard-chaighdeán na h-oibre i dteagasc agus i bhfoghlaím na Gaeilge agus bhí atmaisféar gaelach le sonrú sa scoil. Bhí líofacht cainte na foirne go maith agus bhí suim na ndaltái sa teanga á cothu go héifeachtach acu trasna na scoile.
- *The high quality of teaching and learning in Irish is to be commended and the school environment was favourable to the language. The fluency of the staff was very good and they effectively promote interest in the language amongst pupils.*
- Arts education is effectively promoted. The school regularly avails of the 'Artist in Residence' scheme promoted through the West Cork Arts Centre. The school choir is excellent and pupils are taught tin whistle and guitar. In Visual Arts there is, however, some scope for development with respect to broadening the range of activities offered in line with the curriculum strands.
- A comprehensive Physical Education programme is provided despite the limitations of the school environment. This is supplemented by a wide range of relevant extra-curricular involvements.
- Pupils' social and personal development is aided by common expectations of behaviour and regular opportunities are provided for pupils to be praised for their achievements and to be valued and recognised as unique individuals.
- Teachers make good use of assessment data to inform and improve future provision though more in-depth analysis of standardised test data is recommended. It would also be useful to begin maintaining individual pupil profiles as a means to ensure continuity and development in learning.

### **3. How well pupils are cared for and supported**

- The school is vigilant with respect to the health and safety of pupils and their care and safety are afforded a high priority. There are clear and well designed policies and procedures for dealing with issues of pupil care and these are implemented consistently. Staff members are alert to the emotional, physical and social needs of pupils and work collectively to build an atmosphere of trust and mutual understanding.
- Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the *Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* without modification.

### **4. Leadership and management**

- The board of management makes a positive contribution to school life in key areas such as maintenance, resource provision and in the effective promotion of positive relationships. Currently, pupil and staff morale is very high. A wide variety of effective methods (website, community notice boards, newsletters, social, religious and cultural events.) are used to communicate with parents and they are also encouraged, through homework practices, participation in out of school activities and extra-curricular initiatives, to work in partnership with the teachers. Parents'

questionnaire responses indicate that high levels of trust and confidence characterise their relationship with the school. The financial affairs of the school are managed effectively by the board though the practice of certifying accounts at the end of the formal term of each board needs to be reviewed and annual certification in line with Diocesan and Departmental guidelines should be the standard from now on. With respect to its role in school planning the board should ensure that all official documentation clearly reflects Departmental guidelines with respect to administrative guidelines in relation to the arrival and dismissal of pupils, break times and the length of the school day. The board should also consider the value of disseminating an agreed report to the school community following all future board meetings of parents and advise parents of the benefits of affiliation with the National Parents Council (NPC).

- The long-serving school principal has a thorough understanding of the needs and views of all stakeholders and partners in the life of the school. He is a democratic leader who delegates effectively and facilitates the ambitions of others. He has been a very positive influence on building a unified school community and in the development of a positive environment for learning.
- Staff members with additional responsibilities have clearly defined roles that are in line with changing school priorities and they discharge these responsibly and capably.
- All other teaching staff members contribute effectively to the work of the school and a positive team ethos was apparent during the evaluation.
- Ancillary staff members (two special needs assistants and a caretaker/secretary) greatly assist in the day-to-day running of the school

#### **5. School self-evaluation**

- The process of school self-evaluation (SSE) is well advanced in the school. All teachers are fully involved in reflective and systematic self-evaluation. This SSE process is rigorous and contributes significantly to improving to quality assurance measures.
- The school's capacity to promote an improvement agenda is very good as SSE practices clearly identify areas for improvement as well as key strengths.